

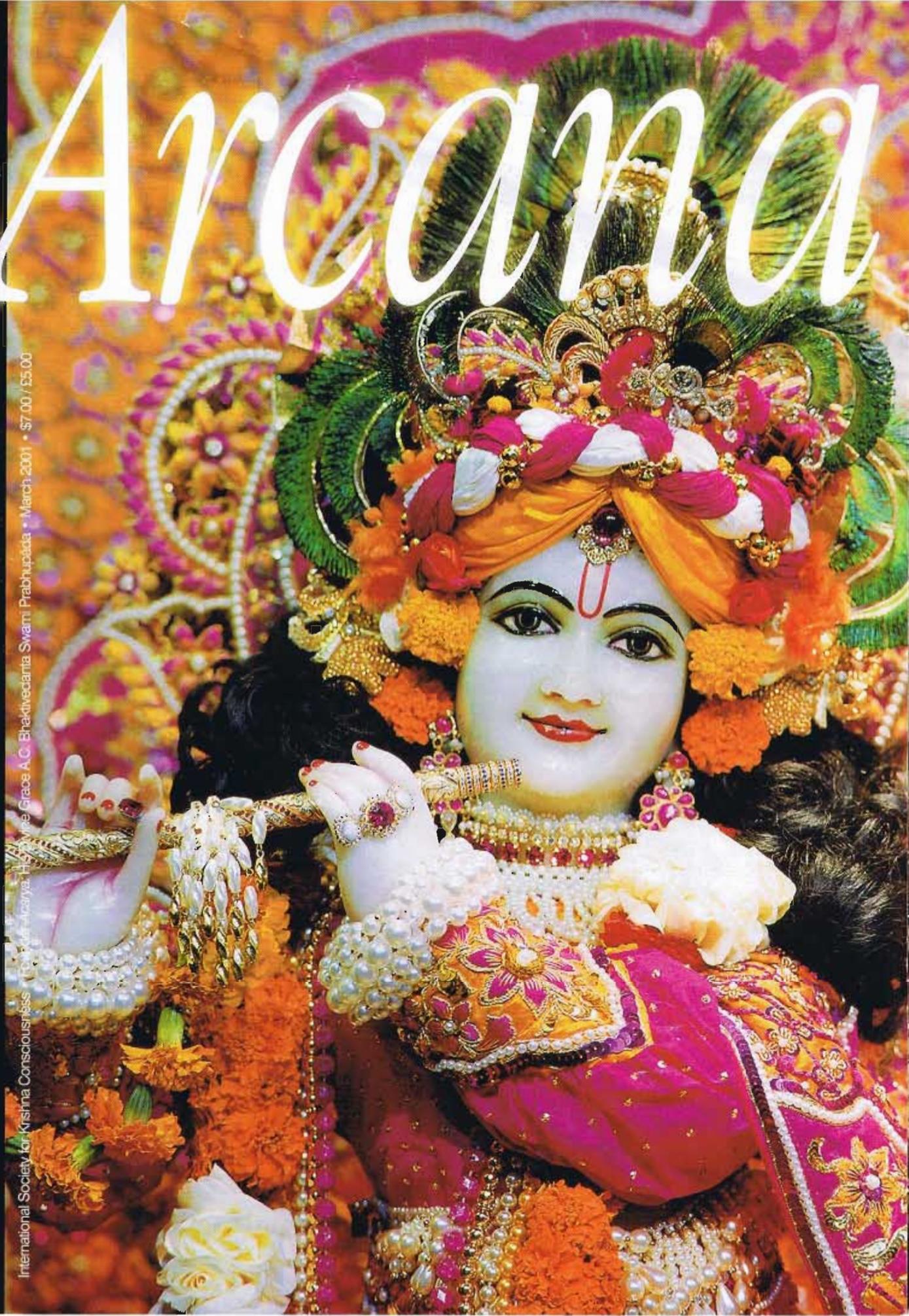
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# Arcana



# Idolatry and Divine REPRESENTATION

An excerpt from “Kṛṣṇa-Sevā—Theology of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Image Worship,”  
a Master’s thesis submitted to and accepted by  
the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, in December 1998

by Kṛṣṇa-kṣetra Dāsa

**J**EWISH TRADITION is noted for its strong critique of image worship. A philosophical explication of this attitude was written by the influential medieval Jewish thinker Moses Maimonides (1135-1204 CE). Although his view on representation is not necessarily that of biblical Judaism, it does represent an important position in metaphysics that has fueled *via negativa* theology ever since his writing of *The Guide for the Perplexed*.<sup>1</sup> Maimonides articulated a radical dualism wherein God is so utterly different from the world that pictorial representation or even verbal representation of him is mistaken and misleading. This position places him at odds with our tradition in question and therefore his view deserves special attention.<sup>2</sup> If we consider Judaism more broadly, there is one element of commonality with a number of Indic religious traditions regarding representation of the divine, in that there are proper and improper ways in which God can be represented; but Judaism (as also Islam, and rarely Christian traditions) is striking in its concern to maintain a radical rejection of the representation of God by *pictorial* means, as mistaken or inappropriate attempts to portray through similarity.<sup>3</sup>

According to Menachem Kellner, Maimonides defines the principles of religion specifically in terms of two principles—the unity of God and the prohibition of idolatry.<sup>4</sup> These two principles imply each other. The unity of God, Maimonides insists, precludes the possibility of divine corporeality, and where there is not a clear understanding of the unity of God, idolatry is at hand. Where corporeality seems to be indicated in scripture, it is due to a misunderstanding of the word *zelem*. In the very beginning of his *Guide for the Perplexed* Maimonides expounds on the meaning of the term *zelem* as being different from the ordinary sense of “form” expressed by the Hebrew word *toar*.

This term [*toar*] is not at all applicable to God. The term *zelem*, on the other hand, signifies the specific form, viz., that which constitutes the essence of a thing, whereby the thing is what it is; the reality of a thing insofar as it is that particular being. In man the “form” is that constituent which gives him human perception; and on account of this intellectual perception the term *zelem* is employed in the sentences: In the *zelem* of God he created him.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This is not to say that his was the first expression of *via negativa* theology.

<sup>2</sup>It could be inferred from the various descriptions in biblical literature that the idea of God having an image is not rejected; however, it is quite clear that pictorial representation, or visual representation for purposes of worship, is forbidden. For Maimonides, however, “Representation is prohibited as a result of the metaphysical claim that since God has no image, any representation of God, and naturally any worship of such a representation, constitutes the worship of a false god. The problem in this case is that any similarity-based representation is mistaken and causes error in the conception of God for anyone who sees or worships such a representation” (Moshe Halberstam and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry*, Translated by Naomi Goldblum, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992, 15-16), citing C.S. Peirce. Halberstam and Margalit distinguish *similarity-based representation* (one thing represents another based on similarity) from *causal representation* (involving relations other than similarity, like metonymy), and *conventional representation* (one thing represents another by convention, as the word “cup” representing an object we drink from).

<sup>3</sup>Halberstam & Margalit, 15-16.

<sup>4</sup>Menachem Kellner, *Maimonides on Human Perfection*, (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1990), 23.

<sup>5</sup>Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, M. Friedländer, trans., (New York: George Routledge & Sons, 1917), 13.



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Similarly, Maimonides expounds on the homonymous character of several biblical terms which superficially indicate bodily features, such as *panim* (face), *ahor* (back), and *leb* (heart).<sup>6</sup> In this way Maimonides directs attention to the unity/incorporeality of God whose exclusive right it is to receive worship as he orders. While Maimonides gives credit to the “idolators” for *not* thinking that a stone or metal image is in and of itself the creator of the world, their problem, he claims, is that they “only notice the rites, without comprehending their meaning or the true character of the being which is worshipped,” and hence they “renounce their belief in the existence of God.”<sup>7</sup>

Thus, according to Maimonides, from superficial (mistaken) understanding of scripture one is prompted to make images, initially as intermediaries to God. But pre-occupation with the rites of worship of such images leads to the error of substitution. A picture or statue, if worshipped as a representation of God, may easily become the sole focus of the worshiper rather than the Person whom the image represents. From this error, a physical representation can become a fetish. “an object to which people attribute powers that it does not have,” especially if the representation, by that error, gains “some control over its worshipers.”<sup>8</sup> When substitution occurs, the image takes the place of the god being worshipped in the eyes of the worshiper. The real object of worship, says Maimonides, loses all importance. In his *Code of Jewish Law* Maimonides concludes his genealogy of idolatry with these words:

As time gradually passed, the honored and revered Name of God was forgotten by mankind, vanished from their lips and hearts, and was no longer known to them. All the common people and the women and children knew only the figure of wood and stone and the temple edifice in which they had, from their childhood, been trained to prostrate themselves to the figure, worship it, and swear by its name. Even their wise men, such as priests and men of similar standing, also fancied that there was no other god but the stars and spheres, for whose sake and in whose similitude these figures had been made. But the Creator of the universe was known to none, and recognized by none save a few solitary individuals. (Laws Concerning Idolatry and the Ordinances of the Heathens 1:2).<sup>9</sup>

If pictorial representation is a *danger* in the biblical traditions, it is, one may say, almost a *necessity* in Hindu theistic traditions, most especially Vaiṣṇavism.<sup>10</sup> With a basic understanding of *avatāra*-theology it comes as no surprise to us that a descent into the world by *bhagavān* invites pictorial as much as linguistic representation.<sup>11</sup> Since his appearance in the world is as a participant therein, and since his purpose relates specifically to increasing accessibility to bound *jīvas*, the Lord allows, or even invites, pictorial representation as a natural consequence of his appearance, especially as seen or envisioned by spiritually elevated souls.

<sup>6</sup> Maimonides, 52-54.

<sup>7</sup> Maimonides, 52.

<sup>8</sup> Halberstam and Margalit, 42.

<sup>9</sup> Isadore Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader*; Library of Jewish Studies, ed. Neal Kozodoy, (West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, 1972), 72-73.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Bennett has eloquently articulated why idolatry is not an issue in Hinduism in general and devotional traditions in particular. Whereas the binary oppositions of subject and object, and between signifier and signified, dominate western discourse on worship (in models proposed by Sir Edmund Leach, Paul Tillich, Roy Ellen, Victor Turner and others), these oppositions are “in India liable to dissolution according to the notion that the soul (*jīva*), image (*mūrti*) and deity (*dēva*) are particularized aspects of divinity. Their differentiation is not reducible to absolute dichotomies. Rather, in many of the devotional traditions, differentiation enables the enlightened soul to realise its innate capacity for experiencing divine bliss (*ānanda*) while enjoying a highly intimate and loving relationship with a personal god of grace.” He then points to a western bias “intrinsic to the very idea of the sacred symbol” embedded in dichotomies of human-divine, earth-heaven, profane-sacred, and material-abstract. The symbol thus acts as an “agent of mediation” which may have a special status “by pointing to, and thereby participating in the reality of, that for which it stands.” This is where the danger comes, according to E.H. Gombrich (cited by Bennett). We are all “apt to regress at any moment to a primitive state, experiencing the fusion of the image and its model or the name and its bearer. Bennett counters, “But surely in a universe where the apparent gulf separating the two worlds is unreal (and who is to say that such a universe is ‘primitive?’) then the reverse might hold true. Enlightenment might only occur when image and prototype, material and abstract, man and divine, signifier and signified, are experienced in their underlying unity. In orthodox western philosophical traditions the holy image is a symbol standing for a higher, intangible reality, while there is always a tendency for the worshiper to see the image as having sacred virtues of its own. Conversely, in Puṣṭi Mārga [the Vaiṣṇava followers of Vallabha, closely akin to Gauḍiyya Vaiṣṇavism] I argue that there is a sense in which the material image and supreme divinity are ultimately undifferentiated. To call the image a symbol in a Neoplatonic or Aristotelian sense would be to devalue its inherent sanctity. The symbol is metonymic rather than metaphoric. In a manner of speaking the symbol is that which it symbolizes. The divine image in Puṣṭi Mārga can be quite literally Krishna’s own form.” Peter Bennett, “Krishna’s Own Form: Image Worship and Puṣṭi Mārga,” *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies* Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer 1993), 114-16.

<sup>11</sup> An art-historical perspective also shows a parallel development of literary and pictorial representations of *avatāras*. See T. S. Maxwell, *The Gods of Asia: Image, Text, and Meaning*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 10-11.



Although *bhagavān* makes himself visible to all as *avatāra*, it is the spiritually adept sage (*ṛṣi*) or pure devotee (*śuddha-bhakta*) who can receive the form of the Lord as vision (*darśana*), seeing him as he is, and can then communicate that vision for others to hear, repeat, meditate upon, and then sculpt. The sculpted form, if faithful to the specifications of revealed scripture (*āgama-śāstra*, or *śilpa-śāstra*, understood to be the faithful recordings of such visionaries' descriptions),<sup>12</sup> can then be worshiped by prescribed procedures which, if properly practiced, enable the practitioner to gain the same vision of the Lord as the sages or devotees who see him "directly."<sup>13</sup>

Comprehension of divine form, then, involves revelation, linguistic representation, pictorial representation, and regulated worship of the pictorial representation under a preceptor's guidance. As one progresses through the stages of *bhakti* in the increasing dedication of one's mind and senses to the service of the Lord, the capacity to see the transcendent form of the divinity becomes fully developed. Seeing becomes *re-cognizing*—in the sense that one cognizes the transcendent form of the supreme Person within one's own heart (*hṛdy-anta-sthā*). At that stage, the value of the pictorial image does not become diminished (as in some strict monist [*advaita*] traditions, in which the image is purely instrumental). Rather, because *bhakti* is itself the goal, one finds in the image a genuinely *re-presentational* presence, made even more so by the power of *bhakti* to attract the Lord. Rather than making an "error of substitution," the *bhakta* would claim that he or she is, with purified senses and mind, making a *correction in perception*: The error of *not* perceiving God in the world is *corrected* by the process of *bhakti*, which enables one to receive the Lord's blessings in the form of divine sight.<sup>14</sup>

That the form of Kṛṣṇa has been directly cognized by devotees and sages in the past is central to Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava doctrine. Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas especially revere in this context the vision of Brahmā, the demigod said to be the original progenitor of the universe, described in the Sanskrit poetry of the *Brahmā-saṁhitā*. Brahmā, after practicing lengthy austerities (*tapas*), becomes initiated by Kṛṣṇa into esoteric knowledge of transcendent existence with a sacred *mantra* consisting of names of the Lord.

By properly hearing and then reciting this *mantra*, he becomes enabled to gain the sight of Govinda (another name of Kṛṣṇa), whom he proceeds to describe in some detail, listing "physical" characteristics but also emphasizing the non-mundane quality of his form:

Always playing the flute, his eyes like blooming lotus-petals, his head adorned with a peacock feather, his beautiful form the hue of a blue cloud; with the unique beauty that charms millions of Cupids—the Primeval Lord, Govinda, do I adore.

Around his neck is a garland of forest-flowers swinging to and fro, and he is adorned with a peacock feather ornament; his flute held in hands adorned with jewelled bracelets, he who eternally revels in pastimes of love, whose charming threefold curved form, *Śyāma-sundara*, is his eternal feature—the Primeval Lord, Govinda, do I adore.

I worship that primeval Lord Govinda, whose form is all-ecstatic, all-conscious and all-truth, and thus full of the most dazzling splendor; every part of that transcendental form possesses the functions of all his senses, as he eternally sees, maintains and regulates infinite universes, both spiritual and mundane (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 30-32).<sup>15</sup>

The first two of these three verses offer graphic, detailed description in terms of physical attributes, emphasizing Govinda's beauty by which he charms his consorts. The third verse gives a more abstract description, reminding the hearer that although the Lord has tangible features, they are of a higher nature than ordinary physical features. He has a "body," but every "part" of it can function in the same way as any other "part." This latter verse echoes other types of description found in Vedic literature (all of which is understood as revelatory, i.e. "envisioned" by sages or devotees),<sup>16</sup> as for example this description of God from the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (8.13):

<sup>12</sup> Guidelines for artists are mainly concerned with proportions, standard attributes, and poses (standing, seated or lying). See Jitendra Nath Banerjee, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1974), especially Chapter VIII, "Canons of Iconometry." Adherence to specifications persists today mainly in south Indian image production. Gauḍiya-Vaiṣṇava practice, at least presently, seems less concerned with adherence to scriptural injunctions, perhaps relying more on directions of one's *guru*. In either case there is submission to tradition, as Heinrich Zimmer notes: "[I]t is not granted to any believer to shape by himself, according to his own ideas, the deity's image he wishes to construct in himself, for only the Divine itself can bear witness to what is Divine. The particular manifestation in which God is to appear is His to decide, and to deviate even in the slightest from the traditional way He is perceived and represented — which lies at the heart of sacred tradition — is a patent absurdity, for this tradition, as its literary form attests, is nothing less than the orally preserved self-revelation of God." Heinrich Zimmer, *Artistic Form and Yoga in the Sacred Images of India*, Gerald Chapple and James B. Lawson, trans., (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 50. An interesting case of sculpting after a "model" is narrated (in an eighteenth century Bengali work *Bhakti-ratnākara*) regarding a contemporary of Caitanya, Gauridāsa Paṇḍit: Having beseeched Caitanya (and Nityānanda) not to depart from his home in Bengal for Pūrī, his wish is satisfied when the two agree to "pose" for him long enough for him to sculpt the supposedly first images of them, in wood. He kept these images and worshiped them for the rest of his life; they are the selfsame images, we are told by his descendants, that are being worshiped today in that same town near Navadvīpa.

<sup>13</sup> See Zimmer, *Op. Cit.* 53-64, discussing "outward sight and inner vision," in which he suggests that Indian iconography is conducive to a meditative type of seeing which naturally leads to "inner vision," aided by properly practiced concentration and chanting of the appropriate *mantra*.

<sup>14</sup> For example, the *Bhagavad-gītā* (11.8) describes Kṛṣṇa bestowing "divine eyesight" (*dīvyam cakṣus*) on Arjuna, his devoted friend, allowing him to see his universal form (*virat-rūpa*). Also Kṛṣṇa speaks of "understanding by direct perception" (*pratyakṣavagamam*) in *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.2.

<sup>15</sup> *veṅkuṁ kuanantam aravinda-dalāyāṭkṣaṁ / barhāvatarāṁsam asitāmbuda-sundarāṅgam // kandarpu-koṭi-kaminīya-viṣeṣa-śobham / govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam aham bhajāmi // ālola-candraka-lasada-vanamālyā-vaiṣṇī- / ratnāṅgadām prāṇaya-keli-kulā-vilāsam // śyāmaṁ tri-bhaṅga-lalitāṁ nīyata-prakāśāṁ / govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam aham bhajāmi // aṅgāni yasya sakalendriya-urtti-manti / paśyanti pānti kalayanti ciraṁ jaganti // ānanda-cinmaya-sad-ujjvala-ugrahasya / govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam aham bhajāmi* (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.30-32. trans. by Sagar, 81-85).

<sup>16</sup> A concise presentation of the vision of the Vedic seers (*ṛṣis*) is offered by Rajendra P. Pandeya in his article "The Vision of the Vedic Seer," in *Hindu Spirituality*, Sivaraman, ed., (New York: Crossroad, 1989).

He has no feet or hands, yet He is the swiftest runner and can grasp anything. Though without eyes or ears, He sees and hears. Nobody knows Him, yet He is the knower and the object of knowledge. Sages describe Him as the supreme, original Personality of Godhead.<sup>17</sup>

Such paradoxical language in this last passage, which holds a tension between form and formlessness, leans more toward the sense of dignity and majesty of the Lord than accessibility and intimacy which is preferred in the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava tradition, which seeks to resolve the paradox by making a distinction between “material form” and “spiritual form.” The former is characterized by limits of time and space comprehended by the bound *jīva*; the latter is characterized as partaking of the “form of eternal-cognizant-bliss” (*sac-cid-ānanda-vigraha*) which is the essential nature of God.

What Brahmā's verses suggest for the followers of Caitanya is that the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* is not denying form or image or body with appendages as such. Rather, what is being denied is form or image in reference to God conceived as having the same sorts of limitations as those we normally experience. In this way God's infinity is preserved without compromising his omnipotence.<sup>18</sup> For Vaiṣṇavas, the omnipotence of God is further demonstrated by his bestowing pure devotees the power of divine sight and the power to communicate that sight to others.

This argument for “spiritual form” and the possibility of comprehending it would not be to Maimonides' liking, no doubt, as he insists that all words used to describe God must be understood as homonyms, and should therefore not be taken as indicating the bodily features or human qualities they suggest. The *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* raises this question of language transparency in a different way:

Śrī Parīkṣit said: O brāhmaṇa, how can the Vedas directly describe the Supreme Absolute Truth, who cannot be described in words? The Vedas are limited to describing the qualities of material nature, but the Supreme is devoid of these qualities (*nirguṇa*), being transcendental to all material manifestations and their causes.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, later in the discussion, the Vedic statements are described as tying up “like animals” persons who are inimical to the Lord. The gist of the answer to Parīkṣit's question is that the Lord is fully capable of revealing himself to the person he desires to bless, and that the Vedas themselves are *sometimes* blessed by him to comprehend his pastimes (*līlā*). Again, the Upaniṣads emphasize that it is the prerogative of the Lord to reveal himself to the one he chooses:

This Supreme Self cannot be reached by argumentation, or by applying one's independent brain power, or by studying many scriptures. Rather, he alone can achieve the Self whom the Self chooses to favor. To that person the Self reveals His own true, personal form.<sup>20</sup>

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, the leading preacher of Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavism in the early part of the twentieth century, spoke of revelation of the “true Form of God” in terms of receptivity by the “unmixed soul” while defending image worship against the charge of idolatry in an interview with an American scholar, Professor Albert E. Suthers:

If a pure entity or unmixed soul sees that Eternal Form of God and receives It in his own pure receptacle and then places this Transcendental Form in the world from his heart as illumining the intrinsically and essentially true Form of God, that never deserves to be called an idol. Just as even by coming down to this phenomenal world, God remains untouched by the influence of *māyā* by dint of His inscrutable power, so does His true Form, too, as revealed to the unmixed entity of His devotee, remain above it even though brought down here. . . .

The Śrī-Vigraha [sacred image] of the Vaiṣṇava philosophy cannot but be the direct indication of the Essential Form of God. By way of an imperfect comparison it may be said to be the proxy of the essential Form of God which is beyond the cognisance of the material eye, just as there are, in art and science, crude representations of invisible matter.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *apāni-pādo javano gṛhītā paśyaty acakṣuḥ sa śrīnoty akarmaṇ sa vetti vedyaṁ na ca tasya vetā tam ātur agryam puruṣam purānam*  
Translation by H.D. Goswami, in the ‘Purport’ to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.87.28, in Bhaktivedānta, Complete Works.

<sup>18</sup> We might be reminded of Maimonides' view that although the sentence “God is wise” in its literal sense has no cognitive meaning, it is better for didactic purposes to say this than to say its cognitively equally meaningless opposite, “God is not wise.” The first statement creates an attitude of respect for the deity, whereas the second statement creates an attitude of disrespect (Halbertal and Margalit, 153-54). One might argue that to claim material forms are forms of God would be an insult to God. Vaiṣṇavas might answer that this would be quite the case, were it so that the forms were merely material. Since it is understood that they have been declared non-material (at least not *merely* material) by scripture (*arayo viṣṇoḥ śikā-dhīh . . . yaśya vā narakī sah*: “One who thinks the worshipable form of Viṣṇu to be merely stone . . . possesses a hellish mentality” [Padma Purāṇa]), the potential insult is removed. It has also been pointed out by Bhaktivedānta Swāmī Prabhupāda that Kṛṣṇa identifies the material elements of this world as his “separated nature” (*bhinnā-prakṛti*). Although consisting of the external energy (*bahiranga-śakti*) of the Lord, material forms are nevertheless his energy, transformable at will into internal energy (*antaranga-śakti*). Another perspective which touches on the Christian notion of God's humiliation as the Incarnation is the suggestion by John Carman: “The consecrated image is the ultimate in God's ‘descent’ . . . coming down to a level even lower than that of God's human worshipers. This ‘real presence’ of divine mercy manifests God's grace in physical weakness at the mercy of those who handle — or even mishandle — him.” John B. Carman, *Majesty and Meekness. A Comparative Study of Contrast and Harmony in the Concept of God*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Erdmans Publishing, 1994), 195. From this perspective, if the material form is a minimization of the dignity of God, it is one which he has chosen to accept for the sake of blessing bound souls.

<sup>19</sup> *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.87.1

<sup>20</sup> *nāyam ātmā pravacanaṁ labhyo na medhāyā na bahūnā śruteṇa yam evaiṣa vṛjite tena labhyaṣ tasyaiṣa ātmā vṛjite tanām svām*  
(Kaṭha Upaniṣad 2.2.23 and Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 3.2.3), H.D. Goswami trans.



The idea of a *proxy* suggested here also indicates representation, but in a different sense than “pictorial” or “linguistic representation.” A proxy is a *person* who represents someone else in a particular function, and in this sense acts as substitute, *on the authority of the person represented*. In that Vaiṣṇavism emphasizes worship as personal exchange, one could say that this type of substitution is occurring, except that the representing and represented Person are one and the same. This would certainly not be regarded as an *error* on the part of the bound *jīva*, rather

Vaiṣṇavas would see it is a *correction* on the part of the omnipotent Lord for the sake of the bound *jīva*.

It may be worth noting that Maimonides’ radical dualism has had its counterbalance within Judaism in the medieval mystical tradition of Kabbalah, which posits two aspects to the deity, the unknowable Ein Sof and the revealed ten emanations (sefirot). Hasidism, John Carman notes, developed these ideas and affirmed an intimate personal relationship between God and the Hasidic mystic.<sup>22</sup>

(to be continued in next issue)

<sup>21</sup> Rūpa Vilāsa Dāsa, *A Ray of Vishnu: The Biography of a Śaṅkṛtyāveśa Āratāra, Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Goswāmī Mahārāja Prabhupāda*. (Washington, Mississippi: New Jaipur Press, 1988), 93. Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, a native of Bengal, wrote and spoke fluent English. The text quoted is part of a longer conversation (from 1929, in Krishnanagar, W. Bengal) which was transcribed later by a disciple who was thought to have audiographic memory. In any case the transcription was approved by the speaker.

<sup>22</sup> Carman, 256-58.



## Nice and Easy

by Darpa-hārī Dāsa (from his book *"Morning Bath"*)

FROM UNDER the white cotton quilts, only Their heads and fingertips stick out. Their eyes are opened wide. They are so beautiful in that position of charming helplessness, like small children. I kneel down, raise the quilts, and there they are: lotus feet—the aim of my life. I stretch my hand and touch them, first the lotus feet of Nityānanda. Oh, how warm and soft they are. From my lips the *mantra* begins to flow—*uttiṣṭha jānaveśvara yoga-nidrām tyaja prabho / nāmno hatte divya-nāmaṁ su-sraddhārtim vitarasi*: O Nityānanda Prabhu, Lord of Jānavā, please rise and give up Your divine sleep. At the market place of the holy name You distribute the divine name, asking only for one's faith in payment. O Lord Gaurāṅga, please rise from sleep and bless the three worlds with your auspicious glance—*utiṣṭhottiṣṭha gaurāṅga jahi nidrām mahāprabho / subha-dṛṣṭi-pradānena trilokya-māṅgalam kuru*. Holding Them about Their waists, I carry them to the altar—*prabho kṛpaya svagatam kuru*: O heaviest Lord; O lightest Lord; O biggest Lord; O smallest Lord; You mercifully allow me to carry you in my hands, in my heart. How do you feel being with me? For my illusion is too heavy. For my sins are too heavy.

*It's easy to carry my Lord in my hands and heart.*